The

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

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Notes of the Month.

With the present month the ministers and members of our various congregations will start their winter's activities. We wish for them every success in their joint labours, and trust they will tend not only to the strengthening of their particular churches, but to the wider usefulness of our Non-Subscribing Church as a whole. With a view to this latter end, and as an object important and imperative in itself, we would again earnestly appeal on behalf of the new Sustentation Fund. If the latter is to accomplish its purpose, and thereby at once become an invaluable means of aid, as well as hold out the promise of increased assistance to later times, it must receive the most resolute and widespread support. There is not a single congregation which will not share directly or indirectly in the benefit it will have to offer, nor is there a single member of any congregation who ought not to respond to its appeal for united and generous co-operation. One of the things to which all our ministers should address themselves is to bring the claims of the Sustentation Fund to the notice of their members. The Committee appointed for the purpose is ready and eager to assist the different ministers by sending a deputation to indicate and emphasise the objects of the scheme and the manner in which these may best be realised. We, therefore, urge that by this or any means thought most advantageous for the end in view there should be commenced this winter a most earnest crusade, so that before long the promise of a sum not less than £20,000 may be assured. Already generous donations have been received, but these need supplementing, not only by the contributions of the well to-do, but also by the self-sacrificing efforts of all our members.

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The death of the ex-Primate Alexander early last month meant a loss to the Irish Church of one who for very many years had been associated with its best culture and its most useful Christian service. Compelled recently by great age to retire from the primacy, he carried with him into his well-earned retirement the affection and respect of many both within and without his own Church. As preacher, he had a reputation as remarkable in England as it was in this, his native country. In literature, he had won for himself no mean place, some of his poems being thought well worthy of inclusion in "A Treasury

of Irish Poetry," and are characterised there by Stopford Brooke "as a poetic contribution to Irish literature . . . of high worth and distinction." But it was as prelate that he is best entitled to remembrance, his labours as bishop beginning two years before the Disestablishment of the Church in 1869, and receiving deserved recognition by his elevation to the Primacy in 1897. Not only throughout that long period, with its many and complex problems, but up to a year or two ago he laboured wisely and unweariedly, making for himself an honoured name that will not readily be forgotten.

* *

Another long and distinguished career closes with the death of Sir Robert Hart. This great administrator's work in China had gained world-wide repute, and its results will prove his most lasting memorial. But we cannot forget the fact that he was a son of the North of Ireland, that his education was received in Queen's College, Belfast, and that three years ago his name was added to the short but eminent list of those who had received the freedom of Belfast. When he returned to this country his reconstruction of the Chinese Customs had been firmly consolidated, and he could confidently entrust its control to others. Although his friends could have wished for him longer time to enjoy the period of repose which followed upon his strenuous life, yet it seems fitting that one who was essentially a worker should pass peacefully hence when his work on earth no longer claimed him.

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Dr. John Campbell is collecting materials for a history of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and would be very glad to receive from present Members of the Church any short family histories which would be likely to be of general interest.

HARVEST THOUGHTS.

Rev. J. J. Magill, B.A.

IN such a season as that through which we have lately passed, it is easy to understand and sympathise with the words of the old writer: "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest." Days of glorious sunshine, nights hardly less clear, the pleasant sound of the reapers in the field, the abundance of the corn: all combined to make the recent harvest such a time of joy and gladness as is rarely experienced. Ungrateful indeed should we be did we fail to remember that: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning." Dwellers in agricultural districts are brought into very close and intimate touch with the hand of God by the proofs of His unfailing goodness evident everywhere. They rejoice not only in the abundance of food provided for man and beast, but also in the possession of that primary gift of God to each of us—life. Without life everything else would be both superfluous and impossible as far as we are individually concerned. It must, therefore, be regarded as the first and the greatest of the blessings bestowed on us by the Heavenly Father. Possibly someone will say to himself that the value of the gift is very doubtful. In his experience, the worries, troubles, difficulties, and weakness accompanying it make the balance incline to the wrong side. He is perhaps half-disposed to fling the gift back to the Giver, as some rashly do. Fortunately, such a dark and pessimistic attitude is exceptional, and gives rise to the suspicion that, where indulged, a wrong use has been made of life. "What is the chief end of man?" asks the Shorter Catechism, and the answer given is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." Now, when life is unsatisfactory, it probably has been employed for some other object than the glory of God. Whether life shall be good or evil, a possession desirable or undesirable is determined by the proportion which high impersonal ends bear in it to base indulgence. A certain amount of selfishness there must be. Without it existence could not be maintained. But the true value of life will only be discovered when the desire of advantage at another's loss is put far away. It will, then, appear to be what it really is, a great opportunity not so much for getting as for doing good. And that which has not been specially sought will surely come: a deep and abiding joy in living.

We have taken life as the greatest of our blessings. Next in importance comes the food that sustains life. Life requires material support, and that has been provided by the Heavenly Father in the fruits of the earth. There is a sufficiency produced for the generous maintenance of everything that breathes. When we remember the inequalities of society, we may perhaps be tempted to think that the distribution of the earth's produce is not what it might be. On the one hand may be found those who have a super-abundance. They hardly know how to get through that which comes to them. Their dogs fare more sumptuously than many human beings. On the other hand are not a few who understand from experience the full meaning of hunger and want. How does it happen that senseless extravagance and abject poverty are to be met with in all cities, and, indeed, in most rural districts as well? When we begin to look closely into the matter we shall probably be deeply impressed with the important part played by character in this connection. At the same time it must be admitted that the path from the bottom to the top might be made easier. The worker deserves more generous remuneration for his services than he always receives. The ratepayers should not be expected to come to the support of business men who are unwilling to pay their assistants a living wage. It is the will of the Heavenly Father that all should have a sufficiency of food, and for that reason He gives us the harvest. But so long as hunger and want exist, the sight of abundance will not cause joy and gratitude, but instead will stir up envy and hatred.

Next in importance amongst God's gifts must be regarded the talents and faculties which add to the usefulness of life. Without food life could not be maintained; but apart from the possession of mind, reasoning power, memory, knowledge, skill of hand, what would life be worth? In thus endowing man, the Heavenly Father raised him to co-partnership with Himself in carrying out His wise purposes. The part entrusted to us in shaping our own destiny and in controlling and directing the future of the lower creation is surprisingly large. It has been given to us by the exercise of Free Will to mould both our character and our career. Man condemns to extinction families of plants and animals considered undesirable. He encourages others, introduces them into countries where they were unknown, and even modifies the type. Surely this is a very wonderful power, of helping or hindering the Creator, entrusted to mortals, and as we think of it we should be very humble, and, at the same time, very glad and grateful.

And then comes the highest of God's gifts—and the last which space will permit us to notice—Spiritual Life. This is that which gives completeness to all the others. It links us up to God Himself, bridges over the gulf between Him and us, and enables us to call Him: "Our Father which art in Heaven." "Ye are the temple of the living God," said Paul. Doubtless we are also akin to the beasts that perish. But is it not a wonderfully encouraging and inspiring thing to remember that there is a divine spark which can never be quenched in each human breast? How can we better show our gratitude to God for His gifts than by so nurturing and developing that divine spark that it may break forth into a burning flame—a burning flame of enthusiasm for holiness in the presence of which the evil promptings of our nature may be scorched and destroyed? With our experience of God's goodness shall we not each say: "Come, Father, lead me safely along life's journey. I love thee and trust thee. Take my hand until I reach Thy feet." That is the attitude of affectionate and fearless dependence which the consideration of God's gifts in the harvest season, and at all times, ought to produce.

ORDINATION.

Rev. John Barron.

"YE have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you," said the Master to the disciples of his love. There are causes behind causes, and if we only understood, if only we could see, the commonest events of life would be bursting with meaning.

"What does it matter about a religion being spiritual if it is not rational?" said a very young Unitarian worker, who was

at the age when nothing more is to be learned. "I studied logic too early in life," said an old priest, "ever to upset my life for the sake of a logical conclusion." Can we always be sure of the starting point, of the premises on which the argument is built?

The growth of "rationalism" in matters pertaining to religion has meant in many quarters small store being set upon the ceremonies which have come down to us through the centuries. Many Unitarian Churches in England no longer celebrate the Lord's Supper. In England among Unitarians the ordination of ministers has practically fallen into disuse, the shake of the hand by the preacher at the Valedictory Service, when the students leave college, is considered a sufficient ceremony wherewith to welcome them into the regular ministry.

But, is there not, in this neglect and disuse, a danger of throwing away what is valuable to the Church's life, simply because the "rationalism" of the passing hour has no need of it? Is the intellect everything, is there to be no place for emotion, for sentiment?

Ceremonies coming down to us through two thousand years of history, by virtue of that very fact, surely have a right to our consideration.

There is one view of Christ which claims a considerable following, and that is, that he just sprang up in the midst of Judea as a man possessed of great spiritual genius, attracting to himself a band of followers, who united after his death to form the Church which Christ himself had no idea during his life-time of forming, that the services were to a certain extent based on the model of the Jewish synagogue, and that the Church's existence was more or less accidental in the beginning.

If that is all that is to be said for it, then in my humble opinion we may just as well cease church going at once, and trouble ourselves no further about the matter. Accordingly Christ's life and work only pertained to two thousand years ago, and he had no interest in the future, no interest whatever in the civilization which was moulded on his religion.

If that really be so, then what obligation is there for us to trouble with the Christian Church any longer; might we not as well drop the whole thing?

"A great spiritual genius." Yes. And there is the crux of the whole question. But what is genius? What is the soul? Whence these inherent powers which assert themselves with such commanding force? "Heredity" was the answer glibly enough given years ago; but some to-day who know all that can be claimed for heredity hesitate to allow such wide claims to be made for it. Is there no solution in the claim which Christ made for his own pre-existence? Putting aside any Biblical criticism which would raise doubts as to this having been taught, nevertheless for centuries in the Church among orthodox and heretics alike we find the pre-existence of Christ passing as an undisputed doctrine. Nor was that doctrine of pre-existence confined to the nature of Christ alone, but to every human soul.

Is there or is there not a spiritual world? Is there any inter-relation between that inner and this outer world? In the Lord's Prayer the petitions are made for the Father's kingdom to come, and for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. A kingdom implies a hierarchy, and that means grade after grade of condition. One will prevails. That order, that unanimity is prayed for to be on earth as it is in heaven.

If this be so, Christ's appearance on earth was in accordance with a definite plan. The claim made in the Pistis Sophia, a Gnostic gospel, that Christ had drawn to him these particular disciples out of the whole world was because of their past; ties in the past had been formed between Master and his disciples. They had not chosen him, he had chosen them.

His work was to go on until the end of the age; that meant the establishment of a definite order, however simple it might be, to survive through all the changes of time and circumstances. What do we know of the resources of the spiritual world? Dare we deny that power should be bestowed on the Church from within, that there should be definitely appointed channels through which that power would pass?

Why not? Has the Church not passed through periods of darkness and corru-

ption, when if it had depended for its spiritual power on its leaders and teachers alone it would have been in a sorry condition? Does the influence of the Church to-day depend upon the power that it generates by its own unaided effort, or is there a power from on high passing through it, a power which is controlled and directed by the Master himself, who is the living Head and Chief Shepherd of his Church? In the light then of this theory, for only as a theory is it here advanced, ordination becomes a living reality and not a dead form. Ordination becomes a sacred initiation, when the Master himself is invoked to accept the candidate as one of his representatives in the sacred office of the ministry, which he himself in his own Divine Person was the first to hold upon earth in the Christian Church. Surely these are considerations which give us pause for thought. By all means let the intellect have full play, and in that exercise it must needs be that on many a point hitherto unquestioned there must be challenge and doubt, which after all are only temporary conditions of mind to be passed through and done with. But greatest of follies would it be to assert that there can be nothing beyond the limit of our reason, that the last word has been said, and that there cannot possibly be a hidden side to the Church's life. Events are moving rapidly. Subjects which were considered associated only with frauds, charlatans, and impostors have now the serious consideration of scientific men. A new realm of investigation may soon claim the attention of the Church, and respect may be regained for much that has come down from the distant past, but which recent generations might impetuously have relegated to the limbo of forgotten things.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH.

Rev. Eustace Thompson.

AFTER the Israelites had invaded the land of Canaan they did not promptly effect its subjugation. Far from that, for two hundred years and more they were continually being harassed and oppressed by the unconquered inhabitants as well as by the neighbouring peoples. The twelve tribes of Israel dwelt, moreover, very much asunder, the tie of patriotism being very feeble among them. In the book of Judges, the seventh in order among the books of the Old Testament, is the story of Deborah, one of the most ancient of Hebrew literature. This is a triumphal ode composed more than three thousand years ago celebrating the victory of six tribes—Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali—in battle with the Canaanites in the valley of Jezreel, near Megiddo and Taanach. The Canaanites were under the leadership of Sisera, who, after the battle, was slain in his sleep by the wife of a Bedouin, into whose tent he had fled for refuge under hot pursuit. The Israelites were led by Barak, of the tribe of Naphtali, and by Deborah, a prophetess who lived in the territory of Ephraim. In order to appreciate the poem with proper understanding, it is best to imagine it rehearsed by Deborah herself before an audience of Israelite princes. The following is a paraphrase:—

You that hear my song should bless the Lord, because there were leaders to take the lead in Israel, whilst the people came forward readily as volunteers.

Listen, you that are kings and princes, whilst I myself sing praises to the Lord God of Israel.

Lord, when thou wentedst out of Mount Seir and the land of Edom, the earth trembled, the clouds dropt rain from the heavens. The mountains, even Mount Sinai in the distance, melted at the presence of the Lord God of Israel.

In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, and in the days of Jael, the wife of Heber, the highways were not used: travellers had to take the byways. There was a dearth of men fit to be rulers in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose like a mother to the people. They began to worship new gods, and after that war broke out, at a time when there were hardly any men properly equipped with arms among all the Israelites.

I feel drawn towards the governors of Israel with admiration, because they were such ready volunteers. You, I say, ought to bless the Lord for it.

Go and repeat the story, you princes

and courtiers, and you travellers. Among domestic scenes, by the side of the wells when they go to draw water, far away from battle-fields, people will tell each other about the righteous acts of the Lord when he ruled Israel.

The people went down to the gates of their cities and marched out of them, and came to me. "Awake, awake, Deborah," they cried out; "encourage us for the battle with a song." And they said to the son of Abinoam, "Arise, Barak, and reverse the position of our captors." Then came those that remained of the nobles with a following of their people. And God Himself came down to take my part against the mighty enemy.

The Ephraimites came down, and after them the Benjamites, the people of Manasseh and of Zebulun, and of Issachar: all with their chiefs. And Barak was there; they poured down from the highland to rush forth under his leadership to do battle in the plain.

The Reubenites stayed discussing the situation among their water courses. They made grand resolutions, but did no more. They were very uneasy and talked the matter over continually, but for all that, they remained inactive, pursuing their usual occupation of shepherding their flocks. None of the Gileadites crossed the Jordan to join our ranks. The Danites too, and the people of Asshur, remained where they were in the midst of the seafaring people among whom they were dwelling.

Zebulun and Naphtali were the people who jeopardized their lives in the hilly battle-field.

The kings of Canaan came and fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; but they fought without getting any booty. The stars in heaven conspired with the earth to fight against Sisera. So did the river Kishon. These things of nature helped me to take courage for the march; so did the noise of the horses' hoofs as the riders made them prance.

But cursed are the inhabitants of Meroz, because they came not to the Lord's battle against the mighty enemy.

Blessed shall be Jael, the wife of Heber, among women who dwell in tents. Our enemy asked her for a drink of water, but she gave him milk in a lordly dish. Then she took a nail in her hand, and with the hammer smote Sisera's head and pierced his temples, and he fell dead at her feet.

Meanwhile the mother of Sisera at the palace sat waiting his return: looking for him through the window, wondering why his chariot was so long in coming. Her court ladies tried to reassure her; indeed, she tried to reassure herself, by supposing they had so much spoil that their return was delayed by the division of it. Probably there would be a damsel or two for every warrior beside a rich spoil in woven and embroidered stuffs. But Sisera never came home again.

So may all the enemies of God perish; but let them that love Him be as the sun rising in its glory and might.

Though doubtless a fact about it accounted very highly commendable in the ode itself, it is not the cunningness of Jael's deed that we are to admire about it. That belongs to the barbarity of the age in which she lived. But that for which we ought to feel admiration is the courageous determination and presence of mind she showed in making use of such opportunity as she had for loyal assistance for her own people, according to such standard of right as she happened to possess. And that which we should admire most in the poem as a whole is its consciousness of achievement wrought with the sanction of God, and of strength derived and of success obtained, from the possession of that consciousness.

"SELF-SUPPORTING AND AID-GIVING."

J. B.

"I CONGRATULATE you on now being not only a self-supporting, but also an aid-giving congregation," said the clerk of an orthodox presbytery, when he was preaching special sermons in one of the churches of his province. And when he said that those people felt mighty proud of themselves, and next year the balance for aid-giving was bigger than ever.

In every-day life, those individuals who have no higher aim than to "pass muster," will seldom even reach that mediocre level. In a congregation where everybody is taking it for granted, that with

the payment of the usual stipends and the addition of vague mysterious assistance from somewhere outside, about which the church-officers understand, but which doesn't really matter to anybody else, it will be more by good-luck than good guiding, if year after year the income of the church doesn't begin to go down, and then the blight of despondency follow to effect its deadly disintegrating work.

In this Universe, there is the inner and the outer, the spiritual side and the material side. The spiritual cannot do without the material, and the material cannot do without the spiritual. The life requires form wherewith to manifest its powers, and the form requires life to maintain its existence. The offertory can be made as much a part of worship as hymn, prayer, lesson, and sermon. "Now concerning the collection, brethren," wrote the Apostle. Sometimes, a special preacher may make an appeal for liberality in such a way as to cause a smile to ripple round the congregation—not that there is any harm in that—but, at the back of people's minds there is too often the idea, that the collection is an innovation.

But in the Christian Church, time, money, and work, from all sincere members is demanded in the name of an Authority far greater than any governing body. Either the work of the Church has to go on, or it has not. Either the gospel of Christ has to be preached, or it has not. The indifferent member is a worse foe to the Church than an openly active opponent. All the attacks of sceptics combined cannot harm the church as much as those members who simply do not care. If the funds of the church are low, if the work is crippled for want of means, if ministers are harassed to live respectably, is this really due to the lack of money among the members as a whole?

"I know I ought to do this, but I don't want to," has often been said in the presence of a noble ideal of life. The great thing needed is to create the want.

The Church right through in every department of its activities is a holy thing, even to the collection of ways and means. It was built upon a voluntary gift. Christ gave himself. There lies the stimulus to give.

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland is very small when placed alongside the other churches. Does that matter? An institution is not valuable because of its bulk, but because of its potency. Are we a living church? When an appeal is made to choose between organisation and anarchy, to join our forces together, to strengthen ourselves by closer union, to strain every nerve, to exert ourselves to the utmost to place the new Sustentation Fund on a sound basis, is there an eager and willing response?

A great moment of choice is now before our church, a test is placed before it. Are we to choose life or death? Are we to awaken and bestir ourselves, and by united action make our church an efficient instrument for the spiritualising and enlightenment of religion, or are we to allow ourselves to be overcome by deadly apathy and indolence, and for our house to be left unto us desolate?

There is not a single person in the whole of our churches who cannot become a centre for the Master's work, who cannot become a channel for the outpouring of blessing. Unite in thought and work on this great scheme, which is now before us, nor permit your interest to flag until success has been achieved, and a union of a deeper and more lasting nature will assert itself, a union of hearts, a co-operation in greater and grander schemes which will open out, and in which our church shall have its part, for the world is in good hands. Shall we be as faithful servants who watch for the coming of their Master, our church efficient, the work well done, prepared, ready to enter upon a wider plan, when the call comes to take a step forward in the world's evolution?

AN EARLY SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

Rev. W. S. Smith.

IN the latter half of the eighteenth century a number of book clubs were established in various country districts in the north-east of Ireland. These became centres from which much intellectual light radiated, as might be inferred from the fact that several persons who in their early days were connected with them, afterwards

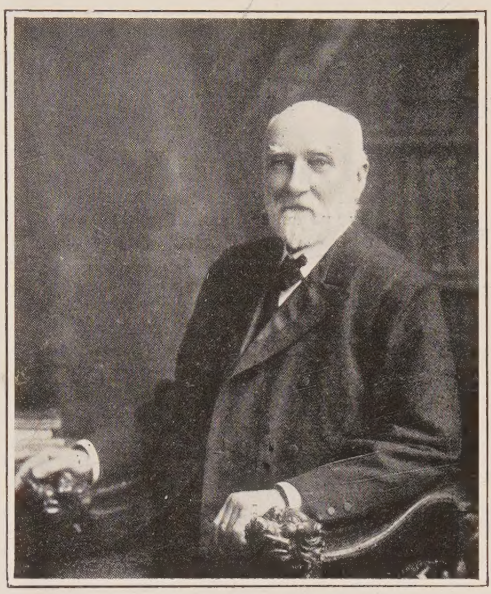
became influential and widely known. Amongst these were Dr. S. M. Stevenson, who was, according to the late Professor Witherow, of Magee College, Derry, "trained in philosophy by Dr. Adam Smith," but was "corrupted in his theological notions by Professor Leechman," of Glasgow; the Rev. Dr. W. Steele Dickson, who was banished for four years on account of his political bearing; and Samuel McSkimmin, the historian of Carrickfergus. The members, judging by the books that belonged to the Doagh Club, were not addicted to very light reading. The remnant of that library still exists, though in a rotting condition; and when, some years ago, I lifted a number of books to ascertain titles, I noticed among them, Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," and Dr. Samuel Clarke's "Sermons," and that many of them dated from the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The Doagh Book Club was established in 1768, Mr. William Galt being largely instrumental in effecting this object, and remaining for many years its leading spirit. This Club is mentioned thus prominently because it is pretty evident that the Doagh Sunday-school sprang from the literary stimulus which this Club supplied. His love of knowledge induced William Galt to devote himself to the teaching of the children of the village and surrounding neighbourhood; and as Sunday was the most suitable day, a portion of it was devoted to this purpose. The proceedings usually commenced with the singing of a psalm, after which a portion of Scripture was used, writing, reading, and arithmetic following, and closing with an address. This order was testified to by the late Mr. John Rowan, of Belfast, a native of Doagh, who received his information from his father, aud also from Mr. Samuel McSkimmin, who had in his boyhood attended the school. The attendance was at times larger than the room used would accommodate, when a portion of the scholars were taught outside the building. It was two years after the establishment of the Book Club, namely, 1770, that Mr. Galt established his Sunday-school. On the occasion of my first hearing the story of this man I was sitting in what had been his house, though much altered, in Doagh and was shown a curious rhyming elegy very neatly written and framed, and bearing the traces of age, affectionately testifying to the excellent character and useful life of Mr. Galt, "by a scholar of Doagh Sunday-school." This "scholar," who had been long dead, was by craft a shoemaker, and by taste an antiquarian on a small scale, having gathered together ancient stone and flint implements, "Dane's" pipes, and various other relics of the past. Mr. Galt died in 1812, but it was not until thirty years afterwards that a table was placed at the head of his grave in Kilbride burying-ground, a mile and a-half distant, to his memory, which bears the following inscription—"Erected 1842 to the memory of William Galt, of Doagh, who died 7th January, 1812, aged 61 years. He was the first to establish a Sunday-school in Ireland—which he did at Doagh in 1770—and had to bear with much opposition and reproach from the prejudiced. But a better age has arrived, and all men now unite to approve his philanthropy and bless his memory." It will be seen by this inscription that early Sunday-school efforts in Ireland, as in mady other places, were regarded with much suspicion and even opposition. During the disastrous year 1798, the village of Doagh received more attention from the military authorities than the people cared for. Being a United Irishman, Mr. Galt received particular attention, his house being twice set on fire (it was thatched), but on each occasion the light was extinguished by the intrepid conduct of an apprentice. Mr. Galt, however, escaped injury. He began his responsible life as a teacher, but relinquished that profession for the occupation of a grocer and provision dealer. He was a member of the Old Non-subscribing congregation of Ballyclare, three miles distant. In the year 1798 an attack was also made upon the Doagh library, around which so many associations centred, which proved much more effectual than those on Mr. Galt's house. This was located in the same building in which Mr. Galt held his Sunday-school. By a strange irony of fate, Samuel McSkimmin, who at the time was one of the Carrickfergus Fencibles, and as a boy had been a scholar in William Galt's Sunday-school, had to assist in this disgraceful work. The door was battered in, the

windows broken, a pair of globes smashed, the bookcases beaten in with the butt ends of muskets, and the books, that must have cost great effort and expense to collect, were thrown iuto the road, gathered into a heap and burned. Mr. McSkimmin confessed that he returned from this dirty work with a heavy heart, for he had helped to destroy an edifice wherein he had received the first rudiments of his education. Notwithstanding these destructive efforts, the Doagh Book Club and Mr. Galt's Sunday-School continued to live and be useful.

Obituary.

MR. THOMAS McERVEL.



BY the death of Mr. Thomas McErvel, on September 5th, our religious community lost a devoted and greatly-respected member, one who for many years had been warmly interested in its success and generously active in the support of all that made for its furtherance.

When his own residence at Bangor made it difficult for him to get frequently to Belfast to attend the services of the First Congregation, of which up to the last he was a valuable member, and when he further realised that others of his way of thinking were also settled in the same locality, it became a desire dear to his heart to make possible the holding of Unitarian services in Bangor. With characteristic ardour and capacity for taking infinite pains he persevered until an attempt was made, under the oversight of the late Richard Lyttle, to draw together the nucleus of what might prove in time a stable if not numerically-strong Unitarian congregation in Bangor. For reasons which need not be detailed here the effort was unfortunately unsuccessful. Undaunted by the great disappointment he felt at the failure of his plan he still continued to hope that eventually it might be realised. But in the meantime many of our congregations knew that his hopes for the future did not diminish his thoughtful and generous consideration of the present.

Our Church at Crumlin, in the neighbourhood of which he was born and brought up, experienced his kindness, as did also our congregation at Moneyrea. Nor was his generosity limited to the needs of particular congregations or to those of our community as a whole. Proud as he was of his Unitarian faith—a faith which he not only fearlessly proclaimed but tried consistently and practically to live—he could respond readily to claims that had their origin elsewhere, as many grateful recipients of his kindness can testify. Thus in private and in public life he had won for himself not only an honoured name but genuine respect and affection.

There is no need to dwell here upon the business side of his life, or to speak of the flourishing concern which his capacity and integrity had built up. That side was appropriately and adequately emphasised in the press notices called forth by his death. That all these causes contributed to widespread and deeply-felt regret fully appeared when on September 8th his remains were laid to rest in the family vault in the City Cemetery, Belfast, the last rites being performed by the minister of the First Congregation. A large gathering of mourners, representative of many classes and creeds, testified to the affectionate recognition evoked by a good man's life and works. No more fitting eulogy could have been uttered than that which fell from the lips of one humble mourner: "There has passed away one of Nature's noblemen."

SYMBOLS.

"Hard, hard it is," I thought,
"To struggle onward true in word and action,
And see so many men grow cold
To all, save eager gain of gold;
Or who in battling for a creed or faction
Count justice, goodness, naught.

"Oh, barren is, and bare,
The heart of man!" I said. "This fair creation,
This thought of God, is full of gloom
Because man's heart is as a tomb—
Shuts out the life of light, the inspiration
Of pure, diviner air."

And then in saddened mood
I sought the window of my room, and glancing
Above the westward-lying land
I saw the deep, dark clouds expand,
And, like a host of evil thoughts advancing,
Darken the hills and wood.

Quick as a dead leaf falls,
The rain, wind driven, from hill to mound descended;
And every hilly ridge loomed bleak
And ghastly—barren streak on streak
That seemed to hang, with nothing earthly blended,
Against dull vapoury walls.

"Ghastly bare is life,
So desolate," I said "'neath clouds, far spreading,
Of pride and selfishness and gain,
With jibes that drop like chilling rain
Upon the wayworn souls and helpless, treading
The paths of sin, of strife!"

Again, I looked above,
And through a rifted cloud came red rays streaming
To hill and mead, afar and wide,
And all was green and glorified.
Why not the world be better for the beaming,
Of one true life of love?

—*Frederic Thomas.*

Reports.

Belfast, York Street.—The annual excursion in connection with the above Sunday School took place on Saturday, August 19th. Scholars and friends to the number of forty left the Midland Railway Station by the 2-55 train for Whitehead, which was the place fixed for this summer's outing. About train time some rain was falling, and dark clouds veiled the sky, thereby giving but little promise of the pleasant time that had been anticipated. Greatly to the surprise of all, however, the rain soon ceased, and the afternoon brightened up. On arrival at our place of destination, which was reached in about twenty-five minutes, a number of the party proceeded to walk by the shore in the direction of Black Head, whence, after a fine view of the Lough and surrounding country which the summit of the hill affords, the return journey was made immediately by a different route. Those, however, who preferred to remain in Whitehead spent the time in various amusements, in which all joined later, the best of spirits only, such as become an occasion of the kind, everywhere prevailing. At six o'clock the entire party retired to the "Towers" Hotel, where a splendid tea was provided, to which everyone did ample justice. The remaining time being short, was utilised to the full, and 7-45, which was the hour fixed for the homeward journey, came all too soon, as was evidenced by the fact of many remaining over to return by a later train, being loth to leave the scene of such delightful enjoyment.

Cairncastle.—A pic-nic for the children of the congregation took place in a very pretty spot on Friday, 18th August. The special collection on 30th July amounted to £12 1s. 0d; not to £11 11s. 0d. as previously reported.

Killinchy.—The committee of the congregation having long felt the necessity of certain renovations and improvements to the Church, and other buildings, decided to hold special preaching services on Sunday, August 20th, to raise funds to carry out their resolve. The Rev. Alfred Hall, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, was the special preacher. Large and representative congregations gathered for the morning and evening services. Visitors from far and near attended on the occasion, many of whom acted as collectors. From every point of view the special effort was a success. The preacher's ministrations were most impressive. His praise was in everyone's mouth. We are grateful to Mr. Hall for upholding so worthily the preaching powers of our ministry on an important occasion. The choir having been augmented for the occasion led the singing effectively and had a large share in the impressiveness of the services.

The collections for the day fully realised expectations. It was found that close on £60 had been raised. Our best thanks are due to visitors from congregations of our own household of faith, as well as to many Presbyterians who joined us and gave their practical help, and to all who contributed to make our special services so successful.

Larne and Kilwaughter. — On August 31st the now annual Summer Festival of this congregation, with Sale of Work, &c., &c., was held in the Church, Schoolroom, and grounds. For once the weather was unfavourable, thus diminishing the attendance by at least 100, but it is satisfactory to record that the receipts were higher than those of last year. At four o'clock the proceedings were formally opened by Mrs. Michelle, *nee* Atkinson—a name likely to be long held in affectionate remembrance in Larne. Mrs. Michelle, in a few simple but very appropriate sentences, expressed her gratification at being among her Irish friends once more, especially as the Festival was designed as much for social intercourse as for pecuniary benefit. The contents of the well-furnished stalls soon changed ownership on satisfactory terms. The usual elaborate preparations had been made for illuminating the grounds, but this, owing to storm and rain, could only be partially realized. The string band brought from Belfast could perform in the open-air for only a very brief period, to the disappointment of many dancers. But perhaps the outstanding feature of the proceedings was the Organ Recital at eight o'clock p.m, when a large number gathered inside the Church. The Crawford Organ never was in finer tone, but the failure of the water supply diminished its effectiveness and made the offices of the performers anything but sinecures. The soloists were Mr. Joseph Conkey, of Belfast, who possesses a pleasing tenor voice, and who sang with much acceptance. "Nearer My God to Thee" (Carey), and subsequently "Ye People Rend Your Hearts" and "If with all Your Hearts," from Mendelssohn's "Elijah." Miss Dorothy Haywood, gold medallist this year of the Royal Academy of Music, London (of which she is a student), for sight singing and silver medallist for singing, has a delightfully clear and pure voice, which she managed like a true artist in rendering the song, entitled, "Memory," by Goring Thomas, and "Pleading," by Sir Edgar Elgar. Miss Haywood, in clearness of enunciation, intelligence of phrasing and sweetness, more than realized the anticipations as to advancement in musical studies entertained by her friends a year since. Miss Isa M'Ninch contributed artistically as an organ solo, "A Carol," by Guilmant, a French composer, but to one person at least the piece was pleasingly reminiscent of Scotch Jacobite Minstrelsy. Whatever the land of its origin it is always, on week-day or Sunday, sweet, tuneful, and touching, and tinged with a colouring of "Divinest Melancholy." Mr. E. Holmes, as usual, presided at the organ, and it is but simple justice to say that his contributions, appealing as they did to the educated ear, amply justified a remark made some years ago by Dr. Price, the then City Organist of Belfast, to the effect that in view of his comparative youth he was the best organist in Belfast. His contributions were "Overture to Egmont," Beethoven; "Largo" (from the New World Symphony) Dvorak, showing—and made very evident by the skilful rendering of Mr. Holmes—how from simplest Indian and Negro melodies combined most charming pieces can be constructed, "Romance" (Vieuxtemps) and the "Grand Coronation March," by Meyerbeer, which concluded the Recital.

Mountpottinger.—On August 23rd the choir held a Social Evening, the chief object of which was to make a presentation to Miss L. Cheshire in view of her forthcoming marriage. The gift, which took the form of a silver-plated cake basket, was handed over on behalf of the subscribers by Miss N. Allen, who, in a few well-chosen sentences, expressed the sentiments of all present. Messrs. J. Allen and Moore having added their words of praise, Miss Cheshire gracefully returned thanks for their beautiful present, and the accompanying good wishes, remarking incidentally on all the kindness shown her by the organist (Miss Morrow). The proceedings terminated with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

Newtownards.—On Tuesday night, August 26th, there met in the vestry of the First (or Old) Presbyterian Church, Newtownards, a representative party of

the congregation to bid farewell to Miss J. M. King, eldest daughter of their respected pastor, who is going to Portland, Oregon. Mr. James Wilson, treasurer of the congregation, presided, and in a short speech spoke of the two farewells that during a short period they had had to make—one to Miss Doggart, their organist, who had so suddenly died, and whose character and usefulness they had begun really to value and appreciate, and the other to Miss King, who had grown up with them from childhood, and who was now about to go to another country to push her fortune. They all wished her every success. Mr. Harrison, secretary of the congregation, followed, and spoke feelingly of their sense of loss in the leaving of Miss King, who had from childhood been associated with the Sunday School, and latterly had done what she could to help in the congregation, and for some years had presided at the harmonium. From the depths of his heart and theirs, they wished her a happy, useful, and prosperous life in the new country to which she was going. Miss M'Dowell then gracefully, in the name of the congregation, presented their parting gift—a purse of sovereigns. Miss King having thanked her, her father—Rev. R. M. King—in a short, touching speech, conveyed her thanks and his to the congregation for this kindly gift and their unfailing kindness to him and his.

Unity Guild. — The fifth and last Excursion of the Summer Session took place on Saturday, September 9th, the venue being the quiet little town of Antrim. In spite of the gloriously fine weather which prevailed the party was somewhat on the small side, although a little band of cyclists joined us on arrival. We were met by Rev. W. S. Smith and Mr. Hugh Hunter (who was spending a holiday at the scene of his boyhood's days), and on the former's recommendation our steps were first directed to the famous Round Tower, our good friend having obtained permission for the party to enter Mrs. Clarke's grounds. With such an authority as Mr. Smith present we learned a good deal as to the various theories advanced by archæologists and others to account for the uses to which these towers were put. Our guide said he found himself somewhat in accordance with the theory that these erections were in the main used by Monastic Orders as places of safe-keeping for their valuables when the Danes and other plunderers descended on particular districts. In confirmation of this he said that a large monastery had existed in the district, being built but a very short distance from where the tower stood. From here we wended our way to the shores of Lough Neagh, getting en route a good view of Antrim Castle (the appearance of which is far from that of a castle) and the local golf links. Three or four of the ladies preferred to view the beauties of the sun-lit waters by viewing them from a wayside seat, but the rest of the party went down to the water's edge, where large stones provided resting places the while our guide (who is a veritable storehouse of local information) pointed out certain landmarks and related certain of his experiences in bygone years, when the Lough had been frozen over to an extent that permitted of his indulgence in the pastime of skating. After awhile an adjournment took place to Hall's Hotel, where ample justice was done to an excellent tea. Entraining about 8-15 p.m. Belfast was reached by 9-0 p.m., the only incident of note being the Hon. Sec.'s encounter with a garrulous fellow-traveller which, at any rate, afforded amusement to those members in the compartment. Attention must now be centred on the Winter Session, which opens on October 18th with a Lantern Lecture by Mr. A. M'I. Cleland. New members will be cordially welcomed, and the various ministers will be happy to give any information in their power.

Echoes.

A Unitarian minister in a parish church pulpit—marvellous! It was not an Irish church pulpit however, nor an English, but a Scottish one. Truly, the world does move—in Scotland at all events. The Rev. Alexander Webster, retired Unitarian minister of Aberdeen, at the request of the clergyman, preached in Peterhead Parish Church on August 13th last. The step appears to have met with the warm approval of the congregation and others, for there were large attendances at both

services. Every Unitarian will feel grateful to the Rev. Dr. Stewart, the parochial clergyman, for the truly liberal step he ventured to take, and sincerely hope no untoward consequences will arise from it.

* *

While Roman Catholicism is fast gaining ground in England, where its representatives are appeased by Governments, both Unionist and Home Rule, it is, if reports are to be trusted, losing ground on the Continent of Europe. We have heard of the changed conditions in France, Spain and Portugal, and now we are told that in the Duchy of Styria, under the Austrian Government, in ten years Protestant places of worship have risen from 18 to 61, and Protestant ministers from 7 to 31. And this in a country containing about 1,300,000 people only!

* *

Funeral sermons are in great vogue in some places. It is not every death however that calls for a discourse of this description, but sometimes such a discourse is expected when there is nothing special to be commemorated. The late Mr. George Dawson, of Birmingham, was once asked to preach a funeral sermon on the occasion of the death of an ordinary member. He did not refuse, though he thought the occurrence scarcely called for such a discourse; so he took for his text the first part of the 22nd verse of the xvi chapter of Luke, "And it came to pass that the beggar died." We read of another funeral sermon being preached, which was not requested. It was on the occasion of the death of Queen Anne, in 1714, and the words selected for the text of the discourse were, "Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter." (II. Kings ix. 34.)

* *

It may be within the recollection of readers that an agreement was made several years since between some English capitalists and a Chinese Viceroy, for power to work a coal-field of 10,000 square miles in extent, during the ensuing sixty years, from which the Government of China was to receive one fourth of the profits. This coal-field would, it was believed, supply the world with coal for 2,000 years. Why did the Chinese desire to grant this privilege to foreigners? The answer is a curious one. They believed if they dug into the earth beyond a certain depth—not very deep—they would let loose a number of dragons. They would let the English do this at their peril. They were only "foreign devils." Time has passed and either wisdom or self interest, has caused the authorities to relent, and they have now determined to repurchase the concession for about £356,000. Superstition has proved a somewhat costly article.

* *

The Pope has appeared in a new role —that of a reformer, not of religion, but of dress. He is indignant at the "scandalous and corrupt" way in which many women dress. He therefore bans it, and commands the clergy to ban it too. Further he advocates assaulting women who persist in appearing in objectionable costumes, for to "hiss" them, is surely to assault them, and youths are to be urged to do this in the streets. This seems strange teaching, and it is difficult to say what it will not lead to. There are occasions on record, when Irish Presbyterian ministers were rebuked for the style of their dress —or some of them at least. At a meeting of the General Synod of Ulster held in Antrim in the year 1697, the dress of ministers came under consideration, when it was recommended that all ministers be "grave and decent in their apparrell," but no stigma was apparently to attach to those who sinned in this respect. In a trust deed of a Sheffield Nonconformist meeting-house of a much later date (1820), this matter is touched on, a clause providing that "under no circumstances shall any preacher be allowed to occupy the pulpit who wears trousers." What there may be of any improper character about trousers I do not know, but prejudice must have been intense. Breeches were the usual garments, and have been superseded by trousers.

* *

In a story called "Queed," recently published, this is how Mr. Queed, an editor, was "rated" by a young lady— "Your duty is to get yourself read; if you fail there you fail everywhere. Is it possible that you don't begin to grasp the point yet? I fancied that your mind was much quicker. You appear to think that the duty of a newspaper is to back people

up against a wall and ram helpful statistics into them with a force-pump. You are grotesquely mistaken"—and much more of a similar purport. And she then marries Mr. Queed to make amends! Editors have to stand a good deal, but our editor, though he may be wigged occasionally by some literary "blue stocking," is not open to such a solatium as Mr. Queed.

* *

We have long been acquainted with an order of lay preachers. Nearly all non-episcopalian denominations in the United Kingdom have been assisted by them. Now it is proposed by the Bishop of Worcester that there shall be an order in the Church of England of Preaching Squires; at which many editors and others stand aghast. *The Times* says the laity dislike being preached at by laymen. What, it may be asked, have laymen done for Methodism, for Congregationalism, and for Unitarianism? They are doing an excellent work for our Church in England. With discretion their services may be helpful in all churches, excepting perhaps the Roman Catholic.

* *

The Record is publishing letters from prominent people, on "The Sermon which Appeals to Me" In one, Mr. Joynson-Hicks, M.P., says—"Alas! I frequently attend a church where the parson tears the Bible to pieces and throws the bits out of the pulpit, all the old doctrines under which I was brought up being scattered to the winds" This is sad, very. But does not Mr. Joynson-Hicks here confuse two things—the Bible and the doctrines it is said to contain? And is it not the latter that the parson tears up and scatters to the wind, and not the former? A visitor attended Canon Henson's church in Westminster, and heard the preacher read the Athanasian Creed, apparently as if it were his creed as well as that of the church, and then ascend the pulpit and preach a sermon in which he denounced it, which implies the possession of a strange kind of consistency. I presume Canon Henson "tore" the creed to pieces, and threw the bits out of the pulpit. Evidently Mr. Joynson-Hicks is not accustomed to looking below the surface of things theological.

Now and again the attention of the public is called to the danger of premature burial. That there is danger, many well authenticated cases go to prove. The mothers of Ebenezer Erskine, and General Lee, were both buried alive, but were rescued before it was too late. At Tonbridge, in 1908, a woman, when about to be buried, and conscious of it, was revived and saved from a fearful death. *The Northern Whig* of August 24th, reported how a boy at Wolverhampton fell from a tree while gathering acorns, and was pronounced dead by a doctor. He revived however, but died two days afterwards. These cases, and many more could be given, prove the great necessity of caution in regard to death, or supposed death. Various tests have been mentioned, but none seem infallible, excepting that of waiting for the setting in of decomposition.

* *

It will be within the memory of most readers that Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, when President of the United States of America, started a movement for the reform of the spelling of the English language. Some very queer combinations were the result. The scheme, was, I believe, soon abandoned; at least, we hear nothing of it now. The subject was raised at the recent Imperial Educational Conference, which was attended by delegates from all parts of the Empire, and a resolution was unanimously passed in favour of the simplification of English spelling. The difficulty is to get a working alphabet that will be acceptable to all classes of the community, whether well educated or not. So unrepresentative is our alphabet that no person hearing a word for the first time could be certain that he could spell it correctly, which is a serious drawback. It was lately said that a student who wrote *yph* for *wife* deserved a degree for his ingenuity. But would not two letters have been more representative—*yf*? Yet people would say such spelling was grotesque, because they were unaccustomed to it. They would not consider its representative character, only its appearance. The writer is old enough to remember something of the ridicule meted out to the advocates of the Phonotypic alphabet of the late Alexander J. Ellis and

Isaac Pitman, elaborated in 1847. It frequently attracted the badinage of *Punch*. The purpose of the alphabet was to provide a sign (letter) for every sound in the language, so that when a word was spoken slowly, it was spelled, and when it was spelled slowly, it was spoken. Twenty-three letters of the present alphabet were used, along with seventeen new ones. These latter were thought to be strange and forbidding. Prejudice conquered reason, and we are where we were sixty years ago. With such an alphabet as the one referred to, there being no contradictions and contingencies, children could learn to read in one third of the time usually required for that accomplishment. The movement had many supporters. Various books and a newspaper were published in accordance with the alphabet, which are curiosities now.

W. S. S.

QUOTATIONS.

"The newness of a new life must not be in new circumstances, but in a new spirit. This is the very thing that religion has to do for you;—to make your studying and your money-getting attain their full ideal, to fill them out to their true capacity, to take their sordidness out of them and fill them with their true spirit. It is with you *in* your occupation that religion has to do."—*Phillips Brooks.*

* *

No man who works so lingers lovingly over his work, and asks himself if there is not something he can do to make it more perfect.

'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work,' said Jesus."—*Phillips Brooks.*

* *

"What thought can be more rich and solemn, than that of God so utterly filling the universe with Himself that out of no unexpected corner of it can start any anxiety to surprise Him; His pure peace in Himself—how it throws out in contrast the frightened, anxious, nervous lives we live! This is 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding'; but then, that peace is communicable to us, not through the understanding, but through love."

—*Phillips Brooks.*

MARRIAGES.

DICK—MATEER.—On August 23rd, in the Remonstrant Meeting-House, Comber, by Rev. J. Joseph Magill, William Dick, of Raleagh, to Dina Mateer, of Lisowen Park, Saintfield.

DOUGLAS—MONTGOMERY.—On September 15th, in Rademon Meeting-House, by Rev. J. Joseph Magill, Robert Douglas, of Carnacally, to Grace Montgomery, of Drumaghlis.

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